

# Overcoming Internalized Views: A Journey to Wholeness

## 13<sup>th</sup> Sakyadhita International Conference on Buddhist Women

Facilitators: Santacitta Bhikkhuni & Jill Boone

Ayya Santacitta will speak on the external views on women and nuns that are part of a traditional Buddhist hierarchy, views which she accepted and internalized to a certain degree and which eventually interfered with her spiritual progress. This led to her making a difficult decision to leave a lineage that had offered excellent training and support to her for many years. She will offer some personal reflections on how she came to the conclusion that it was time to take action rather than just accept the situation, and the internal and external factors that helped her to make this transition.

Jill, as president of Saranaloka, the Ayyas' stewardship organization, will speak on the challenges and rewards of being able to support this transition to wholeness. Saranaloka and the lay supporters have merged their love for the monastic tradition and their respect and honor for women into helping create a healthy nuns' monastic community.

Ayya Santacitta will lead a meditation for the workshop participants.

Jill will lead a group discussion on the topics of this workshop.

### **The Ongoing Cycle of Growth – Key Factors of Support for the Nuns on this Journey**

- 1) Meditation practice and prayer
- 2) Information from sources outside the monastery / lineage
- 3) Encouragement and support from other women & men
- 4) Respectful communication to address the situation
- 5) Gaining a wider perspective and holding the intention to benefit the whole

After 1-5 have been integrated we start again at 1, but with a deeper understanding.

- 1) Meditation practice and prayer
- 2) More information from sources outside ...

Difficulties became soil for wisdom & compassion.

Cycles of growth continue to lead to an increased ability to hold difficulties and benefit others.

### **Key Factors for the Lay Community – especially the Board of Saranaloka**

- 1) Understanding the cultural influences on Buddhist practice and monasticism
- 2) Separating individual views from Dhamma, both ours and others
- 3) Developing compassion, generosity and good will and responding to others from this wholesome place – not allowing our views to guide our responses but to always come from a place of heart
- 4) Knowing that it is time for this situation to change and, while acknowledging the difficulty of change, being willing to help move this forward.

Saranaloka was in a unique position of being able to support a shift to a more wholesome monastic community for women and we decided to do what felt right in our hearts, rather than get tangled in arguing about lineages, timing, and hierarchy. While supporting the Sisters, we also had support from the lay community and others, which helped us stay grounded.